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EVANGELISM IN AMERICA

by

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EVANGELISM IN AMERICA

FOLLOWERS of the Rev. William Franklin Graham, better known as Billy Graham, view his current crusade in New York City as the supreme test of his powers as an evangelist. Like many of his predecessors whose vigorous summons to be saved have stirred the American people in the past, Graham regards the metropolis as the citadel of sin and the most difficult stronghold to conquer for Christ. In his own words, he "wept, prayed and agonized" before accepting the city's challenge. But the *Christian Century*, critical of Graham's methods, editorialized on the eve of the crusade that "It simply cannot fail . . . because canny, experienced engineers of human decision have laid the tracks, contracted for the passengers, and will now direct the traffic."¹

The present crusade recalls another spiritual assault on the metropolis 40 years ago by Graham's best-known predecessor. As with Graham, Billy Sunday's New York revival climaxed a phenomenal career of soul-saving in smaller communities. Newspapers predicted that the 1917 campaign would be "Billy's Rubicon," and described New York as "the graveyard of evangelists."² The Sunday revival, like the present Graham revival, was preceded by months of prayer, fund-raising, and planning down to the most minute detail. In each case delegations from churches and civic organizations in New York and elsewhere were recruited to occupy large blocks of seats, thus guaranteeing sizeable audiences in advance.

It remains to be seen whether Billy Graham can duplicate or excel the records chalked up in New York by Billy Sunday. Sunday preached to 1½ million persons during his 10-week crusade, of whom 98,000 responded to his call to hit the sawdust trail. A more fundamental question, which bothers the Protestant clergy today as it did in Sun-

¹ "In the Garden," *Christian Century*, May 15, 1957, p. 614.

² William G. McLoughlin, *Billy Sunday Was His Real Name* (1955), p. xvii.

day's time, is whether conversion in the grip of revivalist emotion has any lasting effects on the morals and spiritual life of the convert.

Graham is an exponent of a recurring religious phenomenon which goes back to the earliest settlements in the New World. At various times historians have recorded "the end of the age of evangelism" only to have new evangelists appear and attract larger numbers of followers.

Revivalism has flourished in all periods in some sections of the United States with homogeneous populations, and many of the smaller sects are strongly revivalist in their customary services. Occasionally, however, an evangelist comes forward whose unusual power in the pulpit appears to set off a wave of religious emotion affecting millions of people in all walks of life. The most scholarly of the biographies of Billy Sunday states that "religious movements of such broad scope as Sunday's do not occur more than once in every 40 or 50 years," a time schedule which fits the recent emergence of Billy Graham.³

MASS CONVERSIONS IN PAST REVIVAL MOVEMENTS

The first great revival movement, known to historians as the Great Awakening, swept over the colonies in middle years of the 18th century. It began in Dutch settlements in New Jersey and was led by German-born Theodore J. Frelinghuysen, whose vivid preaching of a personal man-to-God religion profoundly moved his people, challenged the pre-eminence of formal religious bodies, and had lasting effects on the Dutch Reformed Church.

The revival spirit spread to New England, where it was led by Jonathan Edwards, pastor from 1727 to 1750 of the Congregational church in Northampton, Mass. Edwards' fiery sermons on the sinner's imminent torment in hell reduced congregations to virtual panic. His work was taken up by George Whitefield, who came from England seven times to preach the Gospel in the colonies. "By the end of 1742 almost every parish [in the colonies] had in some way experienced the fruits of this revival and by 1743 even the South was undergoing a Great Awakening."⁴ During the American Revolution, interest in religion sub-

³ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

⁴ Charles C. Cole, *The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists* (1954), p. 72.

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sided, but toward the end of the century revivalism flamed again both in the South and in New England.

Until the Civil War annual religious revivals were common, especially in small isolated communities, and there were periodic waves of mass conversion in all parts of the country. Some revivals were held in established churches and led by local pastors; a number were staged at leading educational institutions. Yale had 15 revivals in the first 40 years of the last century.

OLD-TIME RELIGION AT THE CAMP MEETING

The characteristic revival temper first was evidenced on the frontier, where outdoor meeting grounds were a powerful social as well as religious magnet for people who traveled many miles from rude pioneer settlements to hold what amounted to community festivals. It was at these camp meetings that features associated with the "old-time religion" became strongly manifest—exhortive preaching, hymn singing, shouting, jerking, and other physical manifestations of religious responsiveness.

Often the frontier revivals were held in new clearings, with squared logs for pulpit and tree stumps for pews, the area surrounded by the families' tents and wagons. In some cases uninhibited expressions of religious feeling degenerated into licentiousness; in other cases the camp meetings sowed the seed for permanent church organizations.

Four established denominations, sympathetic to the evangelist spirit, sent missionaries to the frontier: Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. The Methodists made striking gains through their organization of "circuit riders"—preachers who traveled prescribed routes on horseback to serve religious needs of the pioneers.

The Rev. Francis Asbury, most noted of the early Methodist frontier evangelists, was sent as missionary from England to America in 1771. He journeyed more than 5,000 miles a year from Maine to Georgia and points west to preach the doctrine of salvation through personal awakening and commitment to God. Most famous of the later circuit riders was the Virginia-born Peter Cartwright, who in 1802, at the age of 16, was granted an "exhorter's license"

with authority to carry the word of God through the desolate Cumberland River mouth area.

Cartwright wrote in later life that "A Methodist preacher in those days, when he felt that God had called him to preach, instead of hunting up a college or biblical institute, hunted up a hardy pony . . . and with his library always at hand, namely a Bible, Hymn book and Discipline, he started out and with a text that never wore out nor grew stale, he cried 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!'" Methodist records show that in 1783 there were between 70 and 80 itinerant preachers who rode 30 to 40 circuits; by 1816 the number had grown to 500 and there were 2,000 local pastors.

ORIGINATORS OF MODERN, BIG-TIME EVANGELISM

Modern revivals display many of the features of the early evangelistic campaigns, modified by adaptations of preaching style to changed social trends and by use of advanced methods to influence mass behavior. Over the years, certain innovations were adopted which eventually developed into a kind of technique of soul-saving—a technique borrowed largely from the world of big business.

Leaders in originating modern evangelism were Charles Finney, who gained fame while conducting revivals through the Mohawk Valley in 1826; D. L. Moody, greatest of the post-Civil War evangelists, and Billy Sunday who rose to national prominence in the first two decades of this century. Finney's chief contribution was a certain professional touch which still stamps the great evangelist. "He developed the techniques of controlled and directed mass psychological manipulation which replaced the spontaneous individual and mass hysteria of the camp meeting [and] . . . integrated religious reform with the multifarious social reforms prevalent in the 1830s and 1840s."⁵

Finney used colloquial, often coarse, expressions⁶ and he prayed for individuals by name. He organized aides into "holy bands" to help in winning converts and set up the "anxious seat" to the front for those who needed to cleanse themselves by public avowal of their sinfulness. Finney's

⁵ McLoughlin, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁶ Finney later developed a more refined mode of address and became a leading theologian at Oberlin College. His *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, published 120 years ago, served many later evangelists as a text book.

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revivals were advertised in ways that many of his contemporaries considered undignified.

Moody created urban evangelism, bringing the message of personal salvation to the new class of industrial workers in large cities. He was the first evangelist to enlist wealthy backers and large numbers of volunteer aides in local communities to assure him financial and moral support before opening a revival.⁷ He was the first to stage revivals like theatrical productions, using choir singers, soloists, ushers, doormen and prayer-meeting leaders. He established an "inquiry room" where individual follow-up work could be done with new converts. By teaming up with Ira Sankey, hymn writer and singer, he created the technique later adopted by Sunday of using his chief vocalist as a kind of master of ceremonies whose suave manner contrasted effectively with the more volatile personality of the evangelist.

Never before [Moody's time] had religion been presented with so large an ingredient of entertainment. The normal prayer meeting had always been a lugubrious and depressing affair . . . Here was an evangelist who led off his meeting with a fine song, sung by his companion and supported by a female choir. It was not a circus, but it was something almost as exciting.⁸

As with Graham today, the Moody revivals were frequently advertised in the entertainment sections of newspapers. Moody's success encouraged many others to take up evangelism as a life work.

METHODS OF BILLY SUNDAY, MASTER REVIVALIST

Billy Sunday, the "baseball evangelist," elaborated Moody's methods. He was a smartly-dressed, well-built man who had supreme confidence in his power to manipulate large audiences. Sunday's career as preacher began as a \$40-a-week assistant to the evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman. Work as Chapman's "advance man" gave him insight into the uses of modern promotional methods. Sunday's first evangelistic effort was a sermon delivered in an "opera house" over a grocery store in 1895; he spoke from an outline of a Chapman sermon and received \$68 in collections.

In his early years, Sunday cultivated a dignified pulpit manner. However, an inherent vitality in the ex-athlete

⁷ Among wealthy backers of Moody were J. P. Morgan, Cyrus McCormick, and John Wanamaker.

⁸ George Godwin, *The Great Revivalists* (1950), p. 166.

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proved infectious and word spread of his power to arouse religious conviction. He became a favorite of the Chautauqua circuit, sharing the stage with ventriloquists, travelogists, concert artists, and minstrel shows.

As his popularity, self-confidence and income grew, Sunday gradually altered his methods and transformed his preaching style. An administrative organization was built around him and he began to preach in the slangy, hard-driving style that made his name nationally known.

In one of my first sermons [said Sunday] I had sentences as long as your arm. If a Greek professor tried to pronounce some of the words, his jaw would squeak for a week. I preached that sermon and it fell like a dud. . . . So I took out the old Gospel gun and loaded her up with rock salt, ipecac, barbed wire, carpet tacks . . . and blazed away, and the gang's been ducking and the devil's been hunting his hole ever since!⁹

Until Billy Graham came upon the scene, there was no evangelist to compare with Sunday. He died in 1935 when public interest had turned to more mundane affairs.

CULT REVIVAL LEADERS BETWEEN THE WARS

The best-known religious exhorters of the between-wars period were essentially leaders of cults, who preached in evangelistic style and used revivalist techniques to attract limited bands of devotees.

Aimee Semple McPherson's sensational preaching at her Angelus Temple Church of the Four Square Gospel in Los Angeles in the 1920s made her church as much a tourist attraction as a house of worship. Unlike the true evangelist, "Sister" McPherson was not itinerant. She adapted evangelism to her own flamboyant style, dressed strikingly, and used dramatic lighting and special stunts to hold the attention of her audiences.¹⁰

The chief distinction of Father Divine (born George Baker) was that he allowed himself to be deified by his followers, mostly Negroes, rather than claiming divine inspiration. He was "God," his co-workers were "angels," and his Peace Mission was "heaven." There were other

⁹ Quoted by Homer Rodeheaver, Sunday's gospel singer and master of ceremonies, in his *Twenty Years With Billy Sunday* (1936), p. 98.

¹⁰ On one occasion, Mrs. McPherson, dressed as a traffic policeman, sped down the aisle of her church astride a motorcycle. She blew a police whistle, held up her hand and shouted: "Stop! You're all speeding to hell!" A divorcee and former actress, she called herself "God's star saleswoman."

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cults led by evangelists, some of whom attained notoriety rather than fame and whose movements collapsed when they landed in court for worldly escapades. But these figures were not in the broad stream of American evangelism and are of more interest as oddities than as religious leaders.

Revival Preaching to Fit the Times

IN ITS STRICTEST SENSE evangelism means simply preaching the Gospel. In the United States, it has come to be associated with revivalism, that is, awakening the religious spirit in the multitude through a series of meetings led by a gifted preacher. The evangelist is believed to be divinely inspired to carry out this mission. He need not be a formally ordained minister or even an educated man. Neither Moody nor Sunday graduated from a theological institute, and their meager schooling was evidenced by their faulty grammar. Graham, ordained a Baptist minister, has said: "I am not a great preacher or orator . . . When I speak the Gospel of Christ, it's another Voice speaking and only using me as an instrument."

Characteristically, the evangelist does not labor for a particular denomination or sect but for simple, Christian faith. He has little to say about church dogma or theology; he has much to say about personal commitment to God and rules of living taken from Biblical texts. The evangelist regards himself as a booster of church membership generally and for that reason he expects all churches—all Protestant churches, at least—to give their support.

MISSION OF THE EVANGELIST TO KINDLE FAITH

The evangelist's mission is to convert, not so much the heathen as the indifferent, casual, strayed or unawakened Christian. The modern evangelist's message is aimed at individuals seeking a road to purposeful living who have not yet found it in church membership.

The evangelist tries not only to kindle faith in the individual but to impart some of his divine fire to the local church. "Evangelism's chief task is that of initiating the encounter between God and man and of insisting that the

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other ministries keep that encounter alive."¹¹ What Graham hopes to achieve in New York, as Moody and Sunday attempted before him, is to revitalize religious feeling in a city where more than half of the eight million inhabitants have no church affiliation. In that effort, Graham's meetings with the local clergy are as essential to his purpose as his preaching to the masses.

The conversion sought by the evangelist is a personal matter within each individual. The convert must have an inner mystic experience through which he recognizes his own sinfulness, repents, and surrenders to God's will. Nearly every evangelist has himself had such an experience. For some the awakening has come in a flash, for others as the climax to a long, difficult struggle with the devil.

Whitefield was converted during an illness when he saw a vision of Christ. Cartwright, who described himself as "a wild, wicked boy" with a fondness for horse racing, card playing and dancing, felt the first call in a spasm of remorse after a social gathering, but true conversion did not come until after months of prayer. "In the midst of a solemn struggle of soul, an impression was made on my mind as though a voice said to me, 'Thy sins are all forgiven thee.' Divine light flashed all around me, unspeakable joy sprung up in my soul . . . it really seemed as if I was in heaven."¹² Moody experienced his awakening as he fought the issue alone in the woods near Boston. Sunday felt the call, after a visit to a saloon with his baseball cronies, when he listened to mission musicians on the streets of Chicago.

The effect of conversion is to make the individual a changed person. All of his human relationships and personal dealings in life are affected for the better and he has promise of heavenly bliss after death. The alternative is distress on earth and an afterlife of eternal torment.

RUGGED INDIVIDUALISM OF EARLY REVIVALISTS

Many reasons have been put forth to explain the varying intensity at various times of the revivalist spirit. Many devout persons believe a great evangelist is sent by God at times when the religious spirit is flagging or secular inter-

¹¹ E. G. Homrighausen (dean of Princeton Theological Seminary), "Billy Graham and the Protestant Predicament," *Christian Century*, July 18, 1956, p. 849.

¹² Quoted by Frank G. Beardsley, *Heralds of Salvation* (1939), pp. 80-81.

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ests dominate society. They point out that great revivals in America have taken hold in periods of moral and religious laxity. The rude life of the settler in an untamed land was scarcely conducive to moral refinement or participation in an elite church, but the evangelist preached a common man's religion which touched the emotions of the poorest and least educated.

Many look upon evangelism as a democratization of religion, suited to this country because of its strongly individualistic cast. Evangelism has proved extremely flexible in that it has addressed people in many ways, according to the prevailing temper. Whitefield's graphic descriptions of hell would be as little suited to modern audiences as Billy Sunday's coarse rewording of Bible stories¹³ but Graham's strictures on nervous tension, the taking of tranquility pills, infidelity, and juvenile delinquency strike a responsive chord.

The hell-and-brimstone sermons of pioneer days were effective because the people accepted graphic descriptions of the afterworld as literal truth. Unlettered, living in constant struggle with nature, facing danger from hostile Indians, the frontiersmen were particularly susceptible to invocations of supernatural forces. Furthermore, frontier evangelists were men of their own stamp—rugged, rough-spoken, aggressive and as ready to defend themselves against hecklers with their fists as to defend their faith with words. "Black eyes and broken ribs were the occupational hazards of an itinerant . . . at the time of the western revivals. . . . Some ministers seemed to encourage and revel in the violence they incited."¹⁴

Almost all evangelists have been men of their times. The pre-Civil War evangelists were great stormers against drink and immoral behavior, but they gave attention also to every political and economic issue of the day. Because religion, morals and patriotism were merged in the popular mind, the evangelists of a century or more ago were accepted as authorities on all subjects.¹⁵

¹³ From Sunday's account of Salome's dance: "Herodias shoved Salome out into the room to do her little stunt. He said to her: 'Go like a twin-six!' . . . She didn't have enough clothes on her to flag a hand car . . . The king let out a guffaw of approval . . . said, 'Sis, you're sure a peach. You're the limit. You can have anything you want!'" Quoted by McLoughlin, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

¹⁴ Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

¹⁵ Cartwright served in the Illinois legislature for two years and ran against Abraham Lincoln for a seat in Congress.

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CONTRASTS IN PREACHING OF MOODY, SUNDAY, GRAHAM

The Civil War brought an end to the earlier type of evangelism. Moody appealed to a people whose lives had been disordered by the swift advance of industrialism. He returned to the purely spiritual aspects of religion, bringing to the hordes of the big cities the comforts of old-fashioned Christian faith. Moody stressed the sinfulness of man and the hopelessness of finding relief on earth. He once said: "I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, 'Moody, save all you can!'"

In contrast, Billy Sunday reflected the optimism; also the prejudices, of the middle class in the early years of the 20th century. He promised the repentant sinner not only salvation but also a life full of bounce. His language was pungent, rowdy, even sacrilegious at times. His sermons were enlivened by almost constant physical action: leaping, running, whirling, sliding, stomping. Sunday used a formidable gift of mimicry to amuse and to revile. He personalized a host of popular scapegoats—the liquor trade, crooked businessmen, neglectful fathers, striking workers, the Kaiser, the Bolsheviks—lashing out at them as "weasel-eyed," "hog-jowled," "damnable mutts." He spat in disgust at the devil.

The trail-hitter did not know why the shouting of certain words like "mother," "home," "children," "America," "God," "Christ," "blood," "cutthroats," and "fight" made him grow tense and fearful. He only knew that, when the sermon ended, he felt an uncontrollable urge to get up and go forward to find "peace," "hope," "assurance," "love" and a warm handshake of comradeship in the battle of life; he felt that by going forward he would come close to a man who wanted to help him, a strong, confident, successful man, who would lead him to comfort, security, respect, and friendship.¹⁶

Graham, by contrast with Sunday, is dignified to the point of stolidity. He preaches against many of the same sins as did Sunday—drunkenness, adultery, even the nagging of wives. Like Sunday, he makes his audiences feel that religion is a joyous thing, fully compatible with laughter and enjoyment of the amenities of life. His fundamental message, calling for individual commitment to God, is identical, but he uses few of the devices that delighted Sunday's audiences and his language is lacking in the "hell-soaked-liquor-business" type of invective.

¹⁶ McLoughlin, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

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Many have sought to explain the compelling power of Graham's preaching, in view of his relatively mild demeanor. The answer appears to lie in the evangelist's conviction that he has found truth and his sense of mission in bringing this truth to others. Graham is able to convey an impression of superlative authority, a capacity possessed by every great evangelist.

Reviewing Graham's show a week after it had opened in New York, the theatrical weekly *Variety* said in its issue of May 22 "Graham is a powerful and magnetic personality but not, strangely enough, particularly colorful. He eschews mannerisms, is far less the joker than Bishop Sheen. Nonetheless, it is easy to understand why he is a star on the Bible circuit, for he has a star's inherent authority and command."

Graham plunges directly to the heart of what ails many of his hearers and offers a simple remedy which is available to all. A Scottish minister, explaining Graham's success in his country, said: "The only power Billy Graham has more of is the power of God. Nothing less could . . . give his uneloquent preaching such force and meaning for so many people."¹⁷ For a generation fed up with and suspicious of extravagant oratory, Billy Graham's rather plain, earnest address has a unique appeal.

CRITICISM OF EVANGELISTS; CHURCH ATTITUDES

Few evangelists have escaped criticism but Graham has fared far better than most. His sincerity and piety are conceded even by disbelievers. Many of the 19th century evangelists were ridiculed by the press, victimized by scandal-mongering, and attacked physically by rowdies. Sunday was frequently condemned as a charlatan and his motives were attacked because of his associations with men of great wealth.

The established churches have often frowned on the preachings and the methods of the evangelists, but the Protestant churches, on the whole, have given their support to Graham's efforts. Clergymen who disagree with his theology and disapprove of his techniques still feel that the goal of adding to church membership justifies their co-operation. Sunday never entered a town for a revival without first being assured of the support of all, or nearly

¹⁷ Quoted by Stanley High, *Billy Graham* (1956), p. 81.

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all, the community's Protestant churches. Graham follows a similar policy. Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr wrote in *Advance*, official organ of the Congregational Christian churches, May 31, that that sponsorship of the Graham crusade by the Protestant Council of the City of New York was "disturbing," because the "simple perfectionism" of the revival was at variance with what "Protestant churches on the whole" believe.

According to the May 15 issue of the *Christian Century*:

The most serious challenge to Billy Graham . . . comes not from disdainful liberals or from frightened fundamentalists, but from Christians at the strong center of the church who sense a certain blasphemy in all this red-hot machinery and cool contrivance . . . Our objections . . . are to the Graham procedure which does its mechanical best to "succeed" whether or not the Holy Spirit is in attendance. At this strange new junction of Madison Avenue and Bible Belt, the Holy Spirit is not overworked; He is overlooked.

Support for Graham comes chiefly from the evangelical churches. His methods and his message are regularly criticized in the Unitarian pulpit, and Episcopalian clergymen hold him in no great favor.

Catholics are sometimes warned to resist the Graham lure. The Rev. John E. Kelly, an official of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, has urged Catholics not to attend Graham meetings or even to tune in on them because they are essentially Protestant religious services. The Rev. Gustave A. Weigel, Catholic theologian, warned in the May 4 issue of the Catholic publication *America* that "Graham's sincerity is no guarantee of the accuracy of his understanding" of the Bible.

Business Aspects of Later Day Revivalism

THE MODERN, big-time revival, with its million-dollar budget, its minutely planned operations and its well groomed evangelist, contrasts sharply with the camp meetings of an earlier day at which shabby preachers evoked spontaneous outbreaks of religious emotion. The old-time revival required little money outlay and the evangelist could scarcely

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expect much worldly gain from his labors. Many drew only the income of a small parish, won their bread in other callings, or subsisted on provender given by the faithful.¹⁸

Unlike the modern evangelist who travels first-class and is housed in excellent hotels,¹⁹ the circuit rider frequently slept on cabin floors or in the open. Many suffered from agues, fevers and other ills of malnutrition and exposure. "Asbury was often so ill that he had to be hoisted into the saddle and tied on when he started a journey to his appointments, frequently too weak to speak audibly; his adherence to duty was paralleled by that of many others."²⁰

Graham, like Sunday before him, is known for his well-tailored clothes and impeccable grooming, but itinerant preachers in the early days of the nation were expected to be humbly clad. One recruit to the circuit riders tore off his linen frill and breastpin before beginning his rounds; another was called up before church authorities on charges that he had been wearing gold-rimmed spectacles.

Moody was the first evangelist reputed to have earned a fortune. He was usually paid by the sponsoring committee at the end of a local revival and he received large sums as royalties on sales of hymn books. But most of the proceeds were turned over to the schools he founded; he never had a bank account, and at his death he left only the house he lived in and \$500. Other evangelists of the period customarily were paid from "thank-you offerings" at their meetings. Not until Sunday began to show evidence of considerable affluence was public interest aroused in the remuneration of evangelists.

At the height of his fame, Sunday was reputed to have acquired more than a million dollars. Rodeheaver recalled that "in [Sunday's] later years there may have been a tendency to acquisitiveness" but suggested that it might have been due to fear that he could not meet "the constant financial demands made upon him."²¹ Sunday put most

¹⁸ A few evangelistic preachers of the last century, like Lyman Beecher and his son, Henry Ward Beecher, lived well as pastors of fashionable churches, but they were notable exceptions.

¹⁹ Stanley High in *Billy Graham* (1956) likens Graham to John Wesley in his willing endurance of the discomforts of travel. "His [Graham's] traveling involved acute attacks of homesickness, much weariness, an occasional cold brought on by lack of proper sleep and exercise, indigestion brought on by lack of proper food and . . . all manner of . . . discomforts, inconveniences, confusions and irritations."

²⁰ Charles A. Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting* (1955) p. 158.

²¹ Homer Rodeheaver, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

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of his money in trust funds for his family and left an estate of \$150,000.

Graham in his early years as an evangelist accepted collections taken at his meetings as compensation, but since 1950 he has had an annual salary of \$15,000. The salary is paid by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Inc., which accumulates \$2 million or more a year in voluntary contributions. Graham receives no extra pay for conducting such large revivals as the one now in progress in New York. All of his living expenses, however, are covered and there is additional income from his newspaper columns and from sale of his books.

MANAGEMENT AND COSTS OF MODERN REVIVALS

Costs of a revival in a large city are borne almost entirely by the community itself. Graham's revivals, from a financial and management standpoint, follow closely the pattern developed by Moody and Sunday. A local committee, made up chiefly of clergymen and business leaders, is incorporated. The committee first extends an official invitation to the evangelist to conduct a revival in its city. When the invitation is accepted it proceeds to organize the project and raise the necessary funds with the aid of a "team" from the evangelist's permanent headquarters.

Sunday's advance man usually gave the local committees an estimate of the expected cost of a revival. The committees then solicited promissory notes from individuals which were pledged as collateral against bank loans to get the enterprise under way. The loans were repaid from voluntary offerings at the meetings and other donations. If these were sufficient, as they usually were, the initial pledges were destroyed. Special offerings were sought near the end of a revival to compensate Sunday and his assistants.

The local corporation for a Graham revival similarly undertakes to raise money in advance, but the pledges are for outright contributions and not given for use as guarantees against a final deficit. In addition collections are taken up at the meetings; in New York they have averaged about \$7,000 a night.

The cost of Sunday's revivals rose with his fame. His advance man told local ministers in Denver in 1914 "For \$25,000 you can give the devil a good run for his money,"

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but many of his big-city revivals cost considerably more. Sunday's 10-week crusade in New York was his most expensive; it cost \$320,650, chiefly for salaries and publicity. Sunday insisted that revival towns build him a tabernacle, usually of wood; this he considered more economical than hiring a hall of the required size. He refused to conduct a revival in the old Madison Square Garden arena and the city built him a tabernacle which cost \$65,000 and seated 20,000. Sunday claimed that his revivals cost only \$2 per trail-hitter,²² but this did not include the sums given as freewill offerings to the evangelist or money spent on the hymn books, biographies, postcards, and other articles sold at the meetings.

Graham's budget for a minimum of six weeks in New York was \$900,000, exclusive of the \$300,000 being raised separately for the Saturday night telecasts which began on June 1. The campaign was extended to nine weeks on June 3 and is now scheduled to close on Sunday, July 21.

Of the original \$900,000 budget, one-third was for rent, \$255,000 for advertising, and \$105,500 for office expense. About \$300,000 was expected to come from freewill offerings at the meetings, the remainder from other donations. If the practice in earlier Graham crusades is followed in New York, any surplus after all bills are paid will be donated to a local charity or will go to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Fruits of Two Centuries of Evangelism

IN ASSESSING the influence of evangelism on American life, it is difficult to separate cause and effect; the evangelists both affected and were themselves affected by the main currents of their times. Church historians generally give colonial evangelists credit for the separation of church and state in the United States because they weakened the political power of authoritarian churches and set the stage for the proliferation of Protestant denominations and sects. Evangelism's stress on the equal worth of each soul before

²² The term, "hitting the sawdust trail," originated when Sunday insisted that sawdust be spread over the wooden floors to deaden the sound as sinners came forward to be saved.

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God both encouraged and reflected the democratic temper of the country and brought a measure of democratization to church organizations themselves.

Evangelism has always been a powerful factor in Protestantism. Over the years it has been the driving force behind fundamentalism, which stresses the Bible as literal truth, as opposed to the more liberal and intellectual currents in religious thought. Many believe evangelism of the Graham type today is filling the vacuum created by the weakened influence in theological circles of the Social Gospel, which held that religion must be expressed in efforts to reform society. Even theologians who deplore Graham's evangelism as over-emotional and anti-rational have been turning away from the secularization of religion and calling for more direct preaching of the Bible and more positive efforts to convert.²³

On the secular side evangelism's most weighty contributions have been made to the abolition movement and the prohibition movement. Evangelist oratory helped to provoke the Civil War and Billy Sunday was credited with an important role in winning adoption of the Prohibition Amendment. As a body, however, evangelists have usually been conservative in social outlook, seeking reform by fighting individual sin rather than by overturning established institutions.²⁴

Graham rarely enters the arena of secular controversy but frequently mentions political and social problems, such as the dilemmas created by the cold war and the atom bomb, as symptoms of general infidelity to religion. He has said he will not speak before a segregated audience but he takes no stand on specific instances of southern resistance to racial mixing, except to urge Christian faith and patience.

QUESTION OF LASTING EFFECTS ON CONVERTS

The big question is whether evangelism actually does kindle a real and abiding religious faith. There is little question that the early evangelists played an important part

²³ See "Religious Boom," *F.R.R.*, Vol. I 1955, pp. 433-436. However, Graham was criticized in a sermon May 26 by the Very Rev. Francis B. Sayre, dean of the Washington [Episcopal] Cathedral, for his emphasis on personal reform rather than social reform. Sayre said it was "terribly misleading" to believe that New York or America would be saved by any number of individual conversions, however large.

²⁴ Political radicalism has been denounced as the work of the devil and evangelists of the past have opposed organization of trade unions, suppression of child labor, and public provision of poor relief.

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in the formation of churches and the growth of church membership. The great size of the Baptist and Methodist churches today traces back to the evangelizing efforts of their frontier preachers. Many of the fundamentalist denominations and sects were created by evangelists, as were the Y.M.C.A. and the Salvation Army. Whether future historians will be able to credit present-day evangelists with similar achievements is often debated.

Moody and Sunday were each said to have "reduced the population of hell" by a million souls and the same claim is made for Billy Graham. But do the conversions stick? Before-and-after studies of church membership, made in connection with Sunday's campaigns, showed a sharp spurt immediately after a revival, then a slump followed by gradual recovery to a normal rate of growth. A British religious periodical reported that nearly two-thirds of the men and women converted during Graham's Greater London crusade in 1954 were still regular churchgoers a year later.

Growth in church membership cannot be accepted as the whole answer. Graham has written that "Only God knows when a man is truly converted"; that is why he uses the term "inquirer" rather than "convert."²⁵ The evangelist's ultimate hope is to make the religious spirit the prevailing force in the community. Many earlier revivals appeared so successful to their leaders that they hailed the dawn of a new day of religious supremacy, yet new evangelists continued to come forward to reform a sinful world.

Graham has stated that he does not believe the United States has yet experienced a real revitalization of religious faith, but that the time is drawing near because so many people are obviously seeking the Holy Spirit. He does not call his meetings in New York a revival, but he hopes that through him the Almighty is sounding the tocsin for another and truly lasting Great Awakening.

²⁵ Billy Graham, "Why My Conversions Last," *American Weekly*, May 19, 1957, p. 4. Graham said in New York, May 29, that he knew 25 to 30 per cent of his converts would backslide. "But the wonderful thing is that the majority will stay with Christ."



